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EQUALITY DIVERSITY ACCESSIBILITY INCLUSION

In an act of acknowledgement, commitment and solidarity, 36 staff and carers from Life Without Barriers marched in the 2017 Sydney Mardi Gras Parade (see pages 8 and 9).

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WELCOME TO WE LIVE LIFE

In We Live Life we shine the spotlight on individuals who are making a difference.

We hope you enjoy reading about our volunteers and staff who, through their passion and commitment, are helping people to change their lives for the better.

In each edition we publish articles about our work with the people we support and our services, and share inspirational stories from around the country. We also profile our Life Without Barriers teams, innovations and successes.



Did you know, Life Without Barriers is also on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram? Connect with us @LWBAustralia



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE CLAIRE ROBBS

Welcome to this year's first issue of We Live Life!

This issue features many inspiring stories from the amazing lives of the people we are fortunate to have the opportunity to work with and support.

Meet Hani, a refugee-turned-poet whose incredible journey stands testament to her dreams and ambitions that know no limits (A Very Personal Story – Page 11); also meet committed foster carers Ted and Dave who have opened their hearts and home to over 20 young people in need of care (Parenting is About Love – Page 17); and find out about the five lucky men we support who went on the ride of a lifetime that included encounters with Ferraris, Mustangs and Lamborghinis (Dream Ride – Page 19).

Read the story of Bronya and Anne-Marie's blossoming friendship as they embark on the adventure of independent living (Housemates or Soulmates? – Page 3; and Erin's life-changing decisions that she is able to make for herself under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (A Social Butterfly – Page 7).

Discover the latest on our Reconciliation work through our annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Camp, which saw a group of children, young people and staff take part in a unique experience in Gumbaynggir Country to learn about their heritage, re-connect with their culture and make new friends (Cultural Experience – Page 18).

And finally, in keeping with our commitment to championing equality and diversity, we are delighted to invite you to check out the colourful photo gallery of our first participation as an organisation in the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade (see Creating Equality – Pages 8 and 9).

We always have so much to share in every issue of We Live Life, and hope you enjoy reading it.

Claire Robbs



In spite of their different personalities, Bronya and Anne-Marie fast became very good friends.

HOUSEMATES OR SOULMATES?

The story of Bronya and Anne-Marie crossing paths on their journeys to independence

For most of her life, Bronya had lived with her parents Heather and Colin in Dalby, 80 km north-west of Toowoomba (QLD). Bronya attended Life Without Barriers' disability support day programs in Dalby and also worked part-time at the Endeavour Foundation. But because she was growing up with disability, Bronya's parents thought the possibility of her one day living independently was no more than a far-fetched dream. However, Bronya's dreams of independence proved too big.

Recognising that she was set on becoming independent, Bronya's parents encouraged her to learn new skills that would help make her dream come true. So, five years ago, Bronya moved to Toowoomba to take part in Life Without Barriers' Transitional Respite Program. This program supports people to learn new life skills they may need to live independently, such as shopping, cooking, building community relationships and personal hygiene.

After she completed the twelve-week program, Bronya's confidence in her abilities had grown considerably, and a year later she moved into a house managed by Life Without Barriers. The house is set up as independent accommodation for people with disability, while allowing for staff to live in to support tenants as required. When Bronya first moved into the house she

felt more comfortable with staff being around most of the time, but over the past four years she has become increasingly autonomous and accustomed to her new space.

This year Anne-Marie joined Bronya as her housemate. Anne-Marie had also taken part in the Transitional Respite Program where she built on her skillset to smoothly transition to independent living. She also works at the Endeavour Foundation and is known for her kindness, thoughtful attitude, and infectious laugh.

Bronya and Anne-Marie settled in famously together. They have very different personalities but fast became very good friends who, rather than looking to Life Without Barriers for support, often help each other in small and meaningful ways in their daily lives. Bronya and Anne-Marie share their love for yoga, dancing and going out for dinner, as well as their passion for and commitment to their jobs, and their sense of pride in their home.

Caroline Pedersen is a Disability and Aged Care Operations Manager at Life Without Barriers. When commenting on Anne-Marie and Bronya's friendship, Caroline said:

"Like any house-share, it's all about finding complementary personalities to create a successful arrangement, and

Anne-Marie and Bronya found just that. They're great friends who have learned from each other and the staff and families have noticed a huge difference in their outlooks since they moved in; Anne-Marie's father Pat says he's never seen her so happy."

"Bronya has traditionally been more cautious in new situations...but being around Anne-Marie has brought her out of her shell," continues Caroline. "Both women are now not afraid to do what makes them happy."

Bronya and Anne-Marie's inspiring story was featured in the Autumn 2017 issue of Ruth Magazine – a Queensland Country Women's Association (QCWA) magazine.



Photo Credit: Paul Finch (www.thefinches.com.au)

MY BEST WORK YET



Pictured (left to right): Ashley and Emily with Disability Support Worker Scott Priest.

Meet the man who is breaking down barriers in his new role

Scott Priest recently joined us at Life Without Barriers as a Disability Support Worker. His new role, which involves supporting people with disability living in group homes, comes as a big change to any work he has done before.

Scott started his career as an apprentice mechanic. Following a knee injury he retrained as a computer technician and spent over 15 years working within the car industry in roles ranging from Roadside Assistance Coordinator to Service Manager.

Now a forty-year-old father of four, Scott describes his current role as the best job he has ever done.

“Out of all the jobs I have had, this is hands down the best work I have ever done. The level of support required differs and the people I work with have a range of different disabilities, including autism, aspergers, down syndrome, and mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar [disorder].”

Scott’s role is part of an innovative program called High Growth Jobs, Talented Candidates (HGJTC)* that matches skilled workers with a disability with employers looking for candidates to fill roles in high growth areas. The aim is to create sustainable employment outcomes by matching the right candidate to the right role.

Scott feels his own life experiences help him easily connect with the people he supports.

“I have experienced mental health issues in the past, so I know what it is like. I think that it is a real advantage for me. I have successfully come through the other end of it,” said Scott.

The Australian Network on Disability worked with Life Without Barriers to support managers to improve their confidence to recruit and work with people with disability.

“My disability employment service, [The ORS Group], suggested the role to me,” said Scott. “I thought ‘no way’ at first, but after attending an information session in Tuggerah and meeting some of the people, I knew my skills could be transferred.”

As part of the process Scott attended a four-day pre-employment training co-run by the Australian Network on Disability, The ORS Group and Life Without Barriers. Scott now supports the people he works with to get on with their daily life, get out and about, and attend day programs.

“I’m totally proud of where I am now. I get a great a great sense of accomplishment making a difference to these guys. It’s a great feeling,” says Scott. “I’m doing some training and studying for a Cert IV in Community Services: Disability. Geoff my employment service consultant at ORS has been outstanding. He is still supporting me and making sure I have everything I need. I’m very happy.”

**HGJTC is an initiative of NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). It is being delivered by the Australian Network on Disability. Social Ventures Australia provided the growth industry research and is undertaking the evaluation.*

For more details on our commitment to accessibility and inclusion see our ‘Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan, December 2016 – December 2018’ on our website www.lwb.org.au



FAMILY INCLUSION A PRIORITY

Ground breaking research reveals the experiences of parents who have children in care



The research team is a collaboration of researchers from Life Without Barriers and the University of Newcastle. Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter provided consultation and advice. Photo by: Joe Hinchey

Life Without Barriers, in partnership with the University of Newcastle, has conducted research into the views and perspectives of parents who have children in care.

Lead researcher, Dr Nicola Ross of the University of Newcastle Law School, said there was strong evidence that children in care had better outcomes when they had good relationships with their parents.

“This research explored whether or not parents were supported by legal and support services to improve their parenting and remain part of their children’s lives,” Dr Ross said

The research found that parents experiencing the removal of their children

reported feeling excluded from their children’s lives, even before the legal decision was made to permanently remove their children. One parent said, “Kids need their parents in their lives...one way or the other”.

Dr Ross said the research findings identified an urgent need for a parent and family inclusive approach to child protection and foster care within Australia.

“The overwhelming message from this research is that we need to respect, listen to, hear and include parents and families in our work if we want to ensure optimal outcomes for vulnerable children,” said

Dr Ross. “Sadly, they are not currently included in much of the work undertaken by organisations, professionals, lawyers, and carers. Family inclusion maximises the possibilities that children are restored to their families and ensures that even when children need to be permanently placed outside their families, that beneficial relationships with their parents and families are maintained.”

You can download and read the full report here:

<http://www.lwb.org.au/assets/Parent-perspectives-OOHC-Final-Report-Feb-2017.pdf>



PROFILE: LYLA CARROLL

Meet Lyla who turns to her own personal experiences to treat the people she supports like family

Lyla Carroll is an Aged Care Support Worker based in South East Queensland’s Gold Coast and Brisbane since June 2009.

Born in Napier, New Zealand, Lyla spent her childhood in a children’s home until the age of 18. She later came to Australia as a trained nurse in search of independence and a fresh start after being subject to domestic violence.

Lyla says her focus is on giving the people she supports the same care and attention that she would give a member of her own family.

“Given my earlier personal experiences, this industry offers me the opportunity to use my life circumstances to make a difference,” says Lyla. “I have always been a very strong believer in helping my clients achieve their absolute best potential. It’s very motivating to see their achievements and witness their journey, exceeding all expectations. Their excitement for their own progress makes me so happy for them.”

Lyla enjoys chatting with the people she supports over a cup of tea and taking the time to connect. She says it is important to listen and act because, in the Aged

Care sector, the people she supports are generally quick to tell her what they like and what they don’t like.

“I truly believe it’s the investment in the relationship first and foremost,” says Lyla. “It’s being consistent, discerning, engaging and always personable. It’s playing catch with a person’s dog because they can’t throw the ball themselves. It’s showing someone how to use Facebook so they can see their family member’s pictures. And it’s sometimes knowing when to be there for support without saying anything at all. These are things that you can’t necessarily quantify but are immeasurable in value.”



In this new living space she calls her own, Kristie Clerke is now able to access the support she needs while having private time to do the things she wants to do independently.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CHOICE

A group of six making the move to more independence and community participation

We pride ourselves on helping the people we support live the lives they choose and live their lives without barriers.

Our staff in Jesmond, Newcastle, recently applied this philosophy in the case of a group of people we support living in a shared housing set-up with mild to moderate levels of our support. All six residents with varying degrees of intellectual disability needed support managing their behaviours. Our staff felt they would benefit from the opportunity for greater independence.

Bearing in mind the individual requirements, personalities and degrees of dependence within the group, our team in Jesmond sought to provide them with their own living spaces, where they could continue to access a degree of support from staff, while

enjoying some private time to do the things they wanted to do.

Staff sourced a new group of townhouse style units, each modified to include an individual bedroom, bathroom, laundry, kitchen and living room. All the tenants could access a common courtyard where they could spend time together to socialise, have barbecues or participate in other group activities.

Each person had the choice to ask for support to prepare their dinner, participate in group activities, or go out in the community. Also, before their move to their new homes, the group participated in a course adapted from Housing Pathway's 'Rent it Keep it' program. The training package is designed to assist people learn the skills they need to manage their own space and take responsibility.

"Everyone on staff is happy to see the difference [this move] has made," said Program Manager Karen Young. "All the tenants now have a choice – they can spend time with friends, or can go home to their private space and have some quiet time."

The group's ability to participate in the community as individuals has given them a strong sense of empowerment.

"They are now in charge of their own lives and do not have to depend on people for everything they want to do," said Operations Manager Leanne Millard. "Their quality of life has increased dramatically, and we are changing our support model to allow for more independence and empower them to do what they want to do."



A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

The NDIS is proving life-changing for Newcastle local Erin

The youngest of three children, Erin was born with a rare chromosomal condition. For many years family members provided her with all the support she needed, until they moved to Newcastle and connected with Life Without Barriers.

Erin has since been able to attend regular programs and participate in activities of her choosing across the week. Erin accesses her support programs through her National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan. She has made significant progress in developing new skills, gained greater independence, and has now established her own social network.

Her mum, Lynne, says Erin is enjoying life more than ever. "Mondays she is out dancing. She is a regular at karaoke and ten pin bowling and goes on social outings with her carers. Our lives, and Erin's, have changed for the better and we are so thankful," says Lynne.

Lynne says another important factor in Erin's progress and development is the ongoing and consistent contact with the same team. "Erin had already been working with [Life Without Barriers] when the NDIS kicked off in 2013, so it was an easier transition for us to make as she could continue to be supported by some of the carers and support staff she already knew," Lynne said.

"Erin has always had good receptive communication, but outbound communication has always been more difficult for her. We are thrilled that she can now say the names of her carers, which makes an enormous positive difference to her self-esteem."

Another boost to 31-year-old Erin's confidence and sense of independence is her move to live independently from her parents into shared accommodation. "We are delighted that Erin is now socialising with her peers outside of her day program, which is something she looks forward to every week. She has a house mate that complements her and they work well as a team in their new home. The NDIS program has given us something we never thought we would have for Erin – choice! By having a choice in carers and in social activities Erin is now happy and settled."

CREATING EQUALITY

Life Without Barriers proudly



In an act of acknowledgement, commitment and solidarity, 36 staff and carers from Life Without Barriers marched in the 39th Sydney Mardi Gras Parade on Saturday 4 March 2017.

“Life Without Barriers strives to champion opportunity and equality for all, so being part of such a public celebration alongside the LGBTQI community and other likeminded organisations to support the needs and wellbeing of our diverse community and vulnerable populations was a real

honour,” said Life Without Barriers Chief Executive Claire Robbs. “I was both proud and moved to march with our staff, their partners and wonderful carers in our very first Mardi Gras Parade. We will be back again.”

The energy was electric, with an amazing diversity of people from the LGBTQI community including not-for-profit, corporate, sporting and political organisations, all celebrating and supporting each other under the common theme of this year’s Mardi Gras – EQUALITY!

“There was such a feeling of joy and acceptance as enormous crowds celebrated equality, diversity and inclusion together,” said Life Without Barriers Diversity and Inclusion Manager Fiona Davies. “How we translate this spirit of inclusion and diversity to our employees, clients and wider community going forward is where the real impact will be.”

Our inclusive and diverse workforce was in full voice and colour at our first Mardi Gras participation, and our Talent and Attraction Manager David Meere couldn’t have been prouder, “Our participation

LITTY

marches in 2017 Mardi Gras



in the 2017 Sydney Mardi Gras demonstrated our genuine commitment to an inclusive, open and welcoming environment for our employees, carers and volunteers. We have already received calls from applicants letting us know they saw our people at Mardi Gras and were keen to apply for opportunities with us because of this.”

Encouraging equality and diversity is not new to Life Without Barriers. “We have been recruiting LGBTQI Foster Carers for the past 23 years but we haven’t been visibly celebrating it enough,” said Manager Carer Recruitment Design

Strategy and Engagement Deanne Carroll. “Life Without Barriers has always understood the benefit of having a wide diversity of families to care for children from a diversity of backgrounds. And the positivity demonstrated at Mardi Gras, by the hundreds of thousands in attendance, supports our position on welcoming the LGBTQI community into the Life Without Barriers Foster Care family. Mardi Gras gave us an opportunity to celebrate who we are and what we value.”

The final word, however needs to go to Karyen Teal, Jo Forwood and their daughter Brittany who marched in

solidarity with us as lesbian mums and proud foster carers, “Walking with Life Without Barriers wasn’t just about the colour or the parading down the street. As Foster Carers, it was about coming together as a united group to be the public face of the organisation to say ‘we are here and we need you too’. As we danced our way from beginning to end it was us making our statement that people matter and Life Without Barriers are here to help everyone see that.”

We can’t wait to go bigger and bolder in 2018!

Photo credit:
Bec Lewis (www.blimaging.com.au)

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT



This ambitious young man has come a very long way and dreams of an even brighter future

Several years ago Ashraf* got on a boat to flee religious persecution in his home nation of Myanmar (Burma). Ashraf arrived in Australia in 2013. He had no family with him.

After spending around a year in detention on Christmas Island as an unaccompanied minor, Ashraf and three other boys were finally referred to Life Without Barriers for community detention placement in Adelaide.

Since his placement, Ashraf has shown unwavering passion and dedication to become part of his new community in Australia.

Ashraf had not attended school prior to arriving in Australia. In a display of sheer perseverance he endeavoured to start learning English while in detention on Christmas Island. When he finally got the chance to attend Adelaide Secondary School of English he started to rapidly build on his limited linguistic abilities and showed extraordinary progress. As a result, Ashraf was offered a full scholarship for years 11 and 12 at the Christian Brothers College.

“As I did not have the opportunity to attend school in my country, I realised the importance of good education and will never take that for granted,” says Ashraf. “I feel extremely blessed to have a good education in Australia.”

A lover of sports, Ashraf goes to the gym regularly, takes part in the Life Without Barriers soccer program and recently joined the rowing team at his school. He is also a participant in the Living Arts program.

Ashraf, who recently turned 18, feels safe and settled in Australia. He is currently completing his final year of studies at school and dreams of going to university and pursuing a career in engineering. Life Without Barriers continues to support Ashraf through his journey by assisting him with his studies, giving him advice when needed, and providing emotional support by acting as his family away from home.

“I do not get to live with my family, I do not get to see them every day. In many ways Life Without Barriers is my Australian family that holds a special place in my heart,” says Ashraf.

* Not his real name.



SHARING THE SPIRIT

Engaging the Aboriginal community in Melbourne through music, dance and art

Earlier this year, we were proud participants in the annual 'Share the Spirit Festival'.

The Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation launched the Share the Spirit music, dance and arts festival in 2003, and it has since become an important cultural gathering for local and regional community.

Held in the Melbourne CBD's Treasury Gardens, the annual family-friendly festival showcases the diverse styles of music created by Aboriginal artists.

Folk, Country, Rock, Blues, Soul, Funk, and Hip Hop artists share the stage to wow the audience, who number in the thousands, coming to the festival to immerse themselves in Aboriginal culture.

Members of our Victorian Reconciliation Action Plan Committee – Nazra Ibrahim, Kasun Dissanayake and Fran Grossi – organised a marquee with activities that proved popular among the young festival-goers. The response from children and parents was overwhelming. Everyone came together to paint boomerangs in

what became a great opportunity for Life Without Barriers to engage with the local Aboriginal community.

We feel honoured to be part of this festival which has over the years provided a platform and exposure for local Victorian art, traditional dance, cultural activities and markets.

Share the Spirit Festival partners include City of Melbourne, Department of Justice, Creative Victoria, Freeza, Koori Night Markets and Craft Victoria.

A VERY PERSONAL STORY

Hani Abdile's first collection of poetry and prose paints vivid pictures of her extraordinary experiences

The personal story of Hani Abdile, her journey to Australia as a 17-year-old refugee from Somalia, and her subsequent 11-month detention on Christmas Island, is truly inspirational.

It was during her time in detention that Hani decided to learn English and found solace and empowerment in writing. Now 21, Hani has just published her first book of prose and poetry "I Will Rise" which reflects her enthusiasm and determination to succeed and live a happy and fulfilling life.

For those attending her book launch at the Newcastle Library last month, Hani's experiences came to life through her talk and poetry recital.

"Hani is an inspirational young woman and her migration story brought a personal perspective to her experience on Christmas Island," said our Chief Executive Claire Robbs. "We feel honored that Hani refers to us as her Life Without Barriers family."

Hani is currently a Year 11 student and has ambitions of becoming a journalist and human rights lawyer, but her real dream is to be a mother to thousands of orphans across the world.

After the launch the woman of the hour herself said: "This has all been a remarkable experience for me. The support that I get from Life Without Barriers, I can't describe with words. What I learn from them isn't only about the service they provide, it's about the humanity, the voices they empower and the courage that we share. It's about values that they embrace where each of their clients have a voice to be heard. It makes me realise that life isn't cruel at all but obstacles do come on the way and it's a test of your patience. I am pleased that mother earth opened her arms for us all to meet and embrace our humanity."

You can buy Hani's book online at: <http://writingthroughfences.org/shop>
Or a hard copy from: Parliament on King – 632 King St, Erskineville NSW 2043





LEFT (left to right): Peer researcher Nick with Lachlan and TACSI researcher Tobias learning about what young people look for in a service. RIGHT: Nick and Tobias with Karen (centre).

LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

Using peer research and innovative co-design to give the people we support more choice and control

Since Life Without Barriers' inception almost 25 years ago, we have been firm believers in the importance of empowering the people we support. And the first step of empowering people is to listen to what they have to say.

In the spirit of 'listening helps us better understand', we recently decided to invite peer-researchers who have lived experience with disability to help lead our discussions about creating a new suite of services, channels and customer experience options that respond to the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the flexibility that it offers.

To this end, Life Without Barriers partnered with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) and The Difference Incubator (TDI) to embark on an inclusive co-designing journey to discover and build opportunities for such innovative service models. This journey saw us launch our research in the Playford

(SA), Illawarra Shoalhaven (NSW) and Epping (VIC) areas, where we met with a range of stakeholders including people with disability; family and carers; and staff members and professionals in the field.

The aim of this research is to understand what the helpful aspects are in the current disability services we provide; and what we could do better; and what gets in the way of providing higher quality services.

We were fortunate to have Nick Schumi among our research team as a peer researcher in NSW. Joining us from Adelaide, Nick brought with him a wealth of experience and a noteworthy profile as a recognised leader from the 'Top 100 Leaders Project' for his work leading youth committees for people with disability in South Australia.

It was immediately evident that having a person with lived experience with disability as an integral part of the conversations was not only reassuring

for the participants but also aided in building strong relationships and opening the door for more meaningful contributions to emerge. The participants felt empowered.

"My passion is consultation and having the voice of people with disability being heard," says Nick. "My lived experience is with a physical disability, even though not everyone has this – there is an automatic bond that happens when you've shared a similar experience."

Lauren Weinstein (TACSI) was also part of these research conversations with people and has found the process of conducting co-design research alongside both peer researchers and leading organisations like Life Without Barriers to be rewarding and insightful. "[Life Without Barriers] is really setting a new standard for how inclusive co-design research can and should be when designing innovations within service deliver," says Lauren.



KARATE QUEEN

5 MINUTES WITH T'MEIKA KNAPP

T'Meika Knapp is a forensic psychologist and clinician with our Southern Tasmania Out of Home Care Team. She supports children, young people and carers in the Child, Youth and Family Services Program with a particular focus on children in the #MyLaunchPad transitional care program.

T'Meika is also a disciplined and dedicated athlete and will soon represent Australian Karate in the 2017 World Games. Meet T'Meika!

You juggle two very demanding jobs, can you tell us about that?

"I like to keep myself busy! As well as being a clinician with Life Without Barriers I run my own Karate School, 4 nights per week, I am a State Coach for Karate Tasmania as well as the Vice President of the Australian Karate Federation Tasmania. I am also in training for the World Karate Games in Poland later this year."

How did you come to be selected in the World Games team?

"To qualify I had to win my division in the Oceania Championships in September last year. To be honest, getting into the World Games was a bit of a shock to the system, I wasn't thinking past the Oceania games and was probably thinking more about retiring from elite competition as I am older than most of the other competitors."

Is the World Games like the Olympics?

"Kind of. Karate isn't in the Olympics yet, but will be a demonstration sport in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The World Games in Poland are a points ranking game so the points go towards being part of the Olympics eventually. Going to the Olympics was a childhood dream for me and this is the last time it will be a sport in the World Games so it's pretty special to be part of it."

What do Karate Champs and Clinicians have in common?

"I think Karate balances my clinical work, which can be mentally and emotionally challenging at times. I think the physical activity and the focus of training and competing really helps me. It is a different way to exercise my brain too, I have to mentally plan and analyse the fights and focus on my preparation for tournaments. I use a lot of mindfulness in both, I encourage the kids I work with to be focused in the moment and Karate is very much about that too."

What's involved in getting prepared for The Games?

"It is tricky because Tasmania is a small community and a relatively isolated island. There isn't a great deal of training partners to choose from. I have to visit Melbourne and Sydney a fair bit for training. My Sensei (teacher) is in Melbourne and I go up most fortnights. Sadly there is no funding to be part of the Games, I need to pay my own travel, training and uniform costs. It's hard, I remember as a junior I qualified to be part of competitions in Greece but because of the costs I couldn't go. I am working hard to be able to make it to these ones. I really want to be a role model for the young people I coach and show them what is possible. The rewards definitely outweigh the tiredness."

Find out about the World Games here:
www.theworldgames.org

Support T'Meika here:
www.gofundme.com/tassie-ninja

RECONCILIATION JOURNEY



Celebrating the one year anniversary of our Reconciliation Action Plan

Life Without Barriers is committed to achieving equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We activate this commitment through a set of organisation-wide actions and targets outlined in our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which runs for the period from January 2016 until January 2019.

Our offices and centres in different locations across Australia are currently holding local celebrations to mark the first anniversary of our Stretch RAP – a milestone that presents an opportunity to bring to life our successes in the Reconciliation space. For example, see our story on our annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Camp on Page 18.

Our staff are taking the opportunity to reflect on their RAP actions, and several locations engaged Local Elders to do a Welcome to Country and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to provide catering and/or entertainment for their respective events.

Our Queensland State Office's event included an Acknowledgment to Country delivered by a local Torres Strait Islander staff member, while staff worked together to create a painting plotting the path and achievements of our reconciliation journey so far. Also in Queensland, our Ipswich and Toowoomba Regions teams incorporated their one year celebrations with Cultural Awareness Training.

Our staff at Warwick (WA) hosted Selina Eggington, from local Aboriginal Corporation Dumbartung, who delivered a touching Welcome to Country and gave a speech about Aboriginal history.

Our team in Far North Queensland watched a video of our Chair Terry Lawler's speech on reconciliation and staff members renewed their ongoing commitment to reconciliation and celebrated their achievements in connecting our clients to Culture and Country.

You can find out more about our reconciliation journey and commitment to achieve our reconciliation targets through our Stretch RAP on our website:

www.lwb.org.au





Our offices and centres in different locations across Australia celebrating the first anniversary of our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, which activates our commitment to achieving equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





OUR CHAIR RECEIVES ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

Earlier this year, the Chair of Life Without Barriers' Board of Directors Terry Lawler received an Order of Australia, as part of the 2017 Australia Day Honours. Terry was recognised for 40 years of outstanding service to vulnerable communities.

The Australian honours system recognises the actions and achievements of people who go above and beyond what could be reasonably expected, and in doing so, encourages national aspirations and ideals of the highest community standards and values.

A founding member of Life Without Barriers, in 1994 Terry was instrumental in bringing leaders of the Newcastle community together to form an organisation that truly valued and supported people with disability to

live meaningful lives as part of their community. Ever since, Terry has guided us to break new ground in the development of services to vulnerable people that truly match their needs, and empower them to be part of their communities and in doing so has grown us to where we are today.

When asked about receiving this prestigious honour, Terry said: "I am honoured and humbled to be acknowledged, but I am a small cog in the Life Without Barriers wheel. It is as much

about the acknowledgement of the work thousands of dedicated Life Without Barriers staff have done over the past two decades for vulnerable and disadvantage people as it is for me as their proud Chair."

Everyone at Life Without Barriers congratulates Terry Lawler OA on his outstanding achievements that have led to this well-deserved honour.



STANDING UP AT THE TAMWORTH MUSIC FESTIVAL

Life Without Barriers recently participated as a stallholder in the 2017 Tamworth Country Music Festival held earlier this year.

We shared information about becoming a Foster Carer, the Disability Services we offer and our work in the area of Aged Care with the festival-goers who travelled from all over Australia.

Our stall attracted a large crowd, which not only consisted of people interested in finding out more about Life Without Barriers, but also included foster carers who were keen to share their personal experiences.

One of the biggest challenges of the day was surviving the 40 degree heat. In this regard, the Life Without Barriers hats and sunscreen were a hit.

The Tamworth Country Music Festival is an annual music festival held in Tamworth, New South Wales. It is a celebration of country music culture and heritage in particular the national Australian country music scene, with numerous concerts and live performances held at various venues.





INTERESTED IN BECOMING A FOSTER CARER?

Contact us: 1300 592 227
or carers@lwb.org.au

Find out more:
www.fostercare.lwb.org.au



PARENTING IS ABOUT LOVE

Ted and Dave's remarkable story about sharing their love
and their home as foster carers and fathers

Long-term couple Ted and Dave never thought that their dream of having a child of their own could one day become a reality.

"We have been together since 1979 and are very stable. We always thought that we had a lot to offer children in need of care, not only financially but also in terms of love and security," says Dave.

Ted and Dave found out about foster care back in 2000 and immediately decided to become foster carers. They have been fostering ever since, joining Life Without Barriers in 2015.

"We committed ourselves to the foster care course and soon welcomed our first short term foster child into our home. We were the first gay male carers in the

Northern Rivers and, later in 2013, we became the first gay carers to adopt in regional NSW," says Dave.

At the time, Ted and Dave were trailblazers as LGBTQI foster carers in their community and didn't find that there were a lot of other people in the community to talk to. Ted says, "That has all changed now though and LGBTQI foster carers are now openly welcomed and celebrated by organisations such as Life Without Barriers."

They have since fostered three long term children and 20 short term or respite care children. They currently have a 13-year-old girl in long term foster care together with their 20-year-old adopted daughter, Corina.

"From the age of four when I first came to live here, I have never once felt that I have been judged differently as a child because I have gay Dads," says Corina. "Parenting is not exclusively the traditional husband and wife model. Parenting is about love, and I have experienced that by the truck load."

Ted and Dave, both agree that one of the most rewarding experiences of being foster carers (and fathers) is getting in contact with your own inner child. "When was the last time you went diving to the bottom of the pool to retrieve some object thrown in by your partner in competition with your children, rode the big dipper with them, or hung upside down on monkey bars, eventually falling off from laughing too hard? Shared experiences to me are the most rewarding of all," says Dave.



CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Cultural Camp goes to Gumbaynggir Country

Earlier this year, we organised our annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Camp, which saw a group of children, young people and staff take part in a unique experience in Gumbaynggir Country, near Nambucca Heads on the North Coast of New South Wales.

The 25 children and young people in the camp group currently live in out of home care in the Sydney and North Coast regions.

During the trip everyone came together to sit together in traditional yarning circles, listen to elders tell dreamtime stories, and immerse themselves in different activities to learn more about their culture. The group felt grateful for this opportunity to learn about their heritage, re-connect with their culture and make new friends.

“The camp made me personally think about how important it is to learn about your culture and where you come from,” said National Immigration Support Service Case Coordinator Stephanie Hainke. “I could relate this to my daily work with refugees and asylum seekers who live so far away from the place where they grew up or where their parents were brought up.”

Other camp activities included bush tucker walks, visits to sites that are important to the Aboriginal people of the land, and language lessons, in addition to fishing, beach safety and surfing lessons. The young participants were ecstatic when each received their very own tackle box and Shimano fishing rod.



Operations Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Youth Work, Terri Bird expressed her appreciation for our frontline staff and commended their commitment to volunteering their time so that young people get such valuable learning opportunities.

“As an Operations Manager, I rarely have the time to attend such things, leaving it to our frontline staff. This time, I was lucky enough to find time and attended for a couple of days,” said Terri. “For me, it was wonderful to spend time with our children and young people who don’t get to see me regularly. What an experience!”

Our Cultural Support Planner Harry Callaghan was the camp’s chief organiser and lead. Aboriginal staff members and three staff from Life Without Barriers’ National Immigration Support Service team volunteered to support.



DREAM RIDE

A few months ago, five men from Illawarra (NSW) were lucky to go on the ride of a lifetime. They attended the inaugural 'Dream Ride' at Sydney Motorsport Park, Eastern Creek as part of the MotorWorld Sydney four-day event.

Hosted by Special Olympics Australia, the event offered people with an intellectual disability over the age of 18 the chance to ride on the southern track in Lamborghinis, Mustangs, Ferraris, Aston Martins and Morgans.

Going on these sweet rides for a spin, Scott, Kevin, Peter, Gregory and Andrew had a fabulous time and enjoyed every minute of it. Kevin had initially decided to come along as a spectator, but couldn't resist and ended up riding with his friends.

Senior Disability Support Worker Kelly Lowry was on shift the next day and was happy to find the thrill hadn't yet worn off:

"They were all so excited to tell me all about their adventures," said Kelly. "Each and every one of them still had a smile from ear to ear."

Dream Ride aims to provide motoring enthusiasts with the opportunity to come together and have some fun while raising awareness and funds for Special Olympics Australia.

All visitors were treated to the amazing sight of over 100 luxury and classic dream cars but only a few were lucky enough to go on the dream ride.

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST



New Policy guidelines for placement of children under 12 into residential care.

At Life Without Barriers we put children first.

We want each child we support and care for to feel as safe and respected as they should. We all have a responsibility to make sure their safety comes first – and that they're well cared for, protected from abuse and given the respect they deserve.

For most children, and especially children under the age of 12, this includes living in a caring family environment. Our policy position is that children under 12 who are in out of home care are to be placed in a family based care model.

Residential care is only considered in exceptional circumstances and with the sole authorisation of our Chief Executive. We now have new policy guidelines relating to the placement of children under 12 years of age. These policy guidelines relate to all service sectors. We also produced a short animated clip for use in induction and training, and as an additional resource to assist staff to understand the key elements of the policy.



BONUS CARTWHEEL DAY



When creativity is a connector to community

Our Living Arts Program team in South Australia has a fabulous track record for using creative endeavours to partner with people to help them realise their potential and connect with community.

This year the team's idea of creating an accessible event for all members of the community to explore the arts in a safe and welcoming environment came to fruition. Our Living Arts team recently partnered with Splash Adelaide and NEAMI National, to turn this idea into reality as part of the 2017 Adelaide Fringe Festival. And "Bonus Cartwheel Day" was born!

Welcoming people from all walks of life, Bonus Cartwheel Day offered interactive workshops in a number of areas including circus, parkour, floristry, craft, yoga and meditation.

'Art-Holes' encouraged people to create their own art pieces and the 'Spontaneous Acts of Joy Stage' offered open mic opportunities for community members and Fringe Artists to share their creative acts with the crowd.

"Our ultimate goal was to inspire the community to explore their own creativity and actively participate," said Living Arts Coordinator and Bonus Cartwheel Day Production Manager L'hibou Hornung. "The weather was perfect and the event was peaceful, life affirming and inclusive of people from all walks of life...With hands on support from Splash Adelaide, who were wonderfully supportive all the way, Living Arts was able to bring this dream into reality. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this magic happen, you know who you are. Very impressive!"

Approximately 200 people participated in the inaugural Bonus Cartwheel Day at Kurrangga Park, including many people supported by Life Without Barriers – who not only had the opportunity to develop their event planning and design skills but helped create key decorative elements for the day.

"Bonus Cartwheel Day was the best event I've done with Living Arts so far, even better than the Fringe Parade!" said Aimee Lowe, whom we support through our disability program and who was an event crew member. "We should so do it again!"

Aimee will be happy to know that we are already looking forward to working with Splash Adelaide to present Bonus Cartwheel Day again in the Fringe Seasons to come.

Photo credits: Kay Loechel and Lachlan Young



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